

## Recruitment

by skywalker05

Category: Halo

Genre: Adventure, Sci-Fi

Language: English

Characters: S. Palmer

Status: Completed

Published: 2014-01-17 03:40:09

Updated: 2014-01-17 03:40:09

Packaged: 2016-04-27 04:44:18

Rating: T

Chapters: 1

Words: 1,831

Publisher: [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net)

Summary: How Spartan Jared Miller learned to stop running and love a desk job.

## Recruitment

Jared Miller had been in enough firefights to know that there were no patterns to them. Some people had superstitious signs or actions, or some litany or runic scrawl from across the Earth to which they ascribed their survival, as if the dead ones hadn't been clutching trinkets and habits to their chests when they died. In an effort to bust up a Covenant installation, his Spartan-IV team and their attendant marines had found themselves in the thick of a convoy, Ghosts and Wraiths everywhere, a ragtag multi-species terrorist group lead by factious Covenant.

To all appearances, this was one of the few fanatic factions of Covenant either too devout, too disbelieving, or too cut off from the rest of the universe to have heard that the war was over.

So they had given the aliens warning: a comm signal dialed up to the maximum volume, transmitting from four Spartans at once, shouting the message of peace all across the wilderness.

The Sangheili had not responded except with gunfire. Jared thought the first possibility - that the Elites thought the peace proposal was a trap - was the most likely. Humans were rampant liars, at least compared to what he knew of stiff Sangheili honor.

And despite being seven humans against tens and tens of aliens, they were doing very well.

Transmissions were still zipping back and forth across the desert-scrub battlefield like bullets as Spartans tried to talk and fight at the same time. The splash of energy weapons and the slam of slugs fought to fill the empty, white-noise spaces on their

comms.

Jared had picked up a Warthog a few minutes into the fray and spent his time wheeling around lining up shots for the marine behind him, a middle-aged man who handled the rocket launcher with abandon. They had destroyed enough Ghosts that he was beginning to think the Wraith - an antique, if the flattened shine of its alloy was any indication - would be left outnumbered.

"Stick around, why don't you?" Jared shouted as he spun the wheel, the Warthog's tires tearing at the dirt.

"Got it." The Marine fired another shot, broke apart a Ghost in a shower of gold and purple light.

One tire hit a snag - a rock or a body, Jared couldn't assume - and bucked. He felt the Warthog start to slip out of his control just as he put it into a tight turn to avoid an orange striated boulder as tall as a Wraith. Another Ghost fired, casting sparks across his field of vision.

The tires slipped. He felt the back of the Warthog hit the boulder as it fishtailed, fought to bring it back into motion, scraping against the rock. "Where'd you get your license?" The marine yelled, exultant.

Then a purple blast from the Wraith hit the boulder and the Warthog at the same time. Jared screamed as the wheel came loose in his hand, the vehicle flipping over, suddenly presenting its belly to his HUD as he landed in a sprawl in the dirt next to a spinning front wheel and got to his feet. He saw the marine immediately, pinned between the Warthog and the rock, his uniform and his face blackened, dead from the crash or the blast - Jared couldn't tell. The Spartan pulled his DMR from its place at his back and took two steps out into the desert.

The Elite moved fast. Jared had just glanced down at the radar when he heard it scrape its feet against the stones.

He turned and fired without looking at the creature. The blasts ripped through it, bounced off the nobbly thoracic cage. Two steps more and it stumbled; he could see the instant where its balance teetered too far past the center. The sword was still coming around, the fuzzy edges of the blade the same color as sunlight.

Jared kicked the Elite, two solid slams with the tonnage of his armored foot, opening new wounds. It reached out for him an uncontrolled grab, started to fall.

His left ankle hit a hard surface, as abrupt as missing a step in a stairwell. Jared's sense-memory immediately filled in what must be behind him - the still-warm, crumpled hood of the crashed Warthog. The tow hook bumped his back, and he felt every mote of what that did to his balance - the fine point against the flat edge of the fusion reactor mounted over his shoulders, the slightly imperfect angle of the two metal pieces.

The Elite threw itself against him as it fell down, pummeling Jared's knees, wrapping its arms around his legs. He felt the inner layers of his suit squirming around him, trying to follow his twitchy motions

as he attempted to compensate for balance. One lurch translated into a kick that knocked the Elite away and at least two bloody teeth out, but Jared hit the ground right in front of the Elite, the Warthog casting a hooked shadow over both of them.

The Elite crawled toward him, one hand slipping in the dirt and the other still holding the sword above him. Jared pushed backward, away from the vehicle and the boulder.

The sword came down on his left ankle first, shearing through the armor. Pain rose up and topical med foam fought it down. The feeling of his leg dropping off was a sickening disorientation. Another strike cut across his thigh, the blade juddering when it hit the thicker bone and tangle of ligaments at his right knee.

He braced the DMR in both hands and fired, squeezing the trigger without letting go until the Elite fell back. Its sword dropped to the ground behind it as its face blackened. When it fell, dead and burned, Jared leaned back against the rocks and started to feel the numbness of his suit's medical sealant pouring from the stump of his leg into the rest of his body.

He was pretty sure that his side won the war, and then was horrified that the other Spartans might leave him for dead if he didn't shout soon, so he shouted. Tried to pick himself up on his wounded knee too, but it felt more like a pile of splintered metal than a limb and he dragged himself around on his hands, the armor still supporting itself even as his leg and his - \_stump, don't think stump. \_Referring to a part of his body as \_it \_was suddenly the locus of the pain. \_It \_had been a part of him, and now it had seceded. The fireworks of its independence were bright bursts of redness behind his eyes, occasional signals from his drugged brain that somewhere under the layers he was still bleeding.

His squad picked him up after he stopped dragging and started speaking, calmly into his comm, voice breaking. Begging for all the usual things.

\* \* \*

><p>They took him the med ward on the Infinity, an endless row of long, low cots. The place where his Spartan surgeries had been done was perhaps a wall away.<p>

When he looked down at his amputated leg the first thing that he wondered was how he would tell his parents.

He had been told when he joined up that Spartans would heal faster than baseline humans, but he had never lost a leg as a baseline human and so didn't know. By the time the recruiter - that was what the sterile-white-shirt nurses were telling him, 'the recruiter' - arrived Jared was almost sure that he wasn't suffering any PTSD.

"I thought I was already recruited."

His afternoons were cloudy with sadness and loss, but he had \_lost \_something, and that was to be expected. A gray-haired psychologist visited him once, laughed at his dark humor, and apparently did not feel the need to come back.

Then, the recruiter.

Commander Sarah Palmer stepped into the medward alone. She wore a scout helmet peaked like the hull of a sailing ship.

Jared forced his shoulders higher on the bed and saluted. His left leg was wrapped in metal and bandage, the off-white pant leg tied just above his knee. A normal pant covered his right leg, not hiding the mass of bandage around his knee. His crutches were propped against the bed, but putting weight on the right leg was a slow and painful process that he had only tried once. He would try again tomorrow.

She nodded; he held the salute for another heartbeat before dropping his hand to his lap.

"Ma'am."

"Spartan Miller."

"You...came to visit me." The words tumbled out in a mess that he immediately regretted, whether from painkillers or from her rank he was not sure.

"Thank you for stating the obvious, Spartan." Pause. "I regret your condition but it is what I am here with you to discuss."

"I'm all ears, commander. And only one leg."

"Huh." He wished he could see her expression, but the small push of breath sounded more like amusement than disapproval. "We've been meaning to assign more Spartan handlers to fire teams along with their COs, to provide support for diplomatic situations such as our tenuous peace with the Covenant." Commander Palmer paused.

"To make them more diplomatic," Jared suggested.

"Exactly." Her words flowed more smoothly and quickly now, like she was more comfortable talking about the war than trying to find ways \_not \_to ask him how he was doing. "Now that we're friends, we've gotta talk nicely to the Covvies. Also, so that we have eyes and ears when the diplomacy goes bad. I want you to be a handler for Crimson, one of our newer fireteams. They'll get started on our next big project."

\_Do I have a choice? \_

"Ma'am, I know Spartans can repair a lot, but...is there really any other alternative?"

"Desk work back on Earth. Combat training, although we usually give that to the older gals. You're not qualified to fly a capitol ship, are you?"

"No ma'am."

"I'll give you an hour. There'll be other handlers, Spartans and otherwise. Some almost-retired Marines. Combat pay. Think about it, Spartan Miller."

She left, all silver hunks of armor and long strides.

Jared had no ritual, no comforting trinket, and he had only half survived, one-fourth of his body weight left behind on that planet.

So a desk job it was then, coordinating, watching other people fight. Never too far from the mess hall. It could be worse.

"I'll do it," he said to Commander Palmer when she came back an hour later, busier, nodding her head to a conversation on a comm frequency he couldn't hear when she walked through the door.

Comm jockey Jared Miller. He sat back, moved his fingers as if over a rosary, rubbing at brittle, dry skin. Forever and ever, amen.

End  
file.